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"Amor scribere jussit."

On the Pernicious Effects of Depletion, exemplified in Rush's treatment of the Yellow Fever.

BY WILLIAM COBBETT.

THE system, adopted by Rush, and other physicians, is most aptly denominated, the system of *depletion*; for the merit of it entirely consists in *emptying* the veins and the intestines with an expedition heretofore unknown and unheard of. Of the effects of this system, the people of America have heard and *felt* enough, but of its origin many of them are totally ignorant. For most of the great discoveries, especially those which have contributed to the depopulation of the earth, we are indebted to what appears to have been mere accident; which was also, in some sort, the mother of the system of depletion. As yet *mercurial purges*, and "*bleeding almost to death*," were not counted amongst the means of preserving life, when the Pennsylvania Hippocrates happened to stumble on a smoky old manuscript present received from Dr. Franklin.

At the first breaking out of the yellow fever, he made use of "*gentle purges*;" these he laid aside, and had recourse to "*a gentle vomit of ipecacuanha*;" next he "*gave bark in all its various forms*, of infusion, powder, and tincture, and joined wine, brandy, and aromatics with it;" this was followed by "*the application of blisters to the limbs, neck, and head*;" these torments were succeeded by "*an attempt to rouse the system by wrapping the whole body in blankets dipped in warm vinegar*;" he next "*rubbed the right side with mercurial ointment, with a view of exciting the action of the vessels through the medium of the liver*;" after this he again returned to bark,

which he gave "in large quantities, and, in one case, ordered it to be injected into the bowels once in four hours ;" and, at last, having found, that wrapping his patient in *blankets dipped in warm vinegar* did no good, he "directed buckets full of cold water to be thrown frequently upon them."

Surprising as it may seem, his patients *died*! Thus baffled, as he tells us, in every attempt to stop the ravages of the fever, he anticipated all the numerous and complicated distresses attendant on pestilential diseases. "Heaven alone," says he, "bore witness to the anguish of *my soul*! But," proceeds he in the same strain of disgusting egotism, "I did not abandon a hope that the disease might yet be cured. I had long believed that good *was* commensurate with evil, and that there *does* not exist a disease for which the goodness of Providence *has* not provided a remedy." And modestly presuming, that he was (as he afterward boasted in print) the instrument chosen by Providence for discovering the remedy which it had in this case provided, he tells us, that he applied himself with fresh ardour to the investigation of the yellow fever, and for a long time in vain. "But," says he, "before I desisted I *recalled* that I had, among some old papers, a manuscript account of the yellow fever, as it prevailed in Virginia, in the year 1741, which had been put into my hands by Dr. Franklin, a short time before his death." This present proved to be, in its qualities, something like that which poor Hercules received from Dejanira.

Rush tells us (Account of Yellow Fever of 1793, page 197) that he was much struck with certain passages of this old manuscript, but particularly with one, in which the writer observed, that "an ill timed scrupulousness about the *weakness* of the body was of bad consequence," and he declared, that he had given a purge, when the pulse was so low that it could *hardly be felt*."—Reading on, Rush says, he came to the following words :—"This evacuation must be procured by *lenitive chologoque purges*."

"Here," says he, "I paused.—A new train of ideas suddenly broke in upon my mind."—He then

mentions his former scruples : "but," adds he, "Dr. Mitchill" [the author of the old manuscript] "in a moment dissipated my ignorance and my fears. I adopted his theory, and practice, and" [without any trial] "*resolved to follow them!!*"

Having, "in a moment," formed this resolution, he very soon proceeded to put it in practice. The "chologoque purge" that he fixed upon was composed of ten grains of calomel and fifteen of jalap. To this purge, which the inventor sometimes called the Samson of medicine, was added copious blood-letting; a most powerful co-operator!

With these *remedies* the Pennsylvanian "Hippocrates" set to work in the beginning of September. This practice gained no partisans, except amongst the ignorant beings who were about his person, or who had recently been his pupils. The mercurial purges became popular, and the discoverer so elated, that he thought it no longer necessary to suppress the suggestions of his vanity; accordingly, on the 12th of September, he actually came out in the newspapers with an exulting recommendation of the use of *his* specifics, as the only means of saving the lives of the sick.

Various were the publications that he now sent through the papers, in the form of paragraphs, cards, letters, &c. in one of which he asserted, that, in consequence of his discovery, there was no occasion for fleeing to the country, for that the yellow fever was no longer a dangerous disease, but was now perfectly under the power of medicine. He concluded this card to the people, which was published on the 12th of September, by saying, that, with *his* remedies, "there was no more danger to be apprehended from the yellow fever, than from the measles or the influenza." On the 17th of the same month he concluded a letter to the College of Physicians, by positively declaring, that could *he* visit all the sick, and be assisted with proper nurses, the disease would soon be reduced, in point of danger and mortality, to a level with a common cold! Still rising in audacity, he wrote to Dr. Rodgers of New-York, on the 3d of October, a letter which was immediately published,

and in which he asserted, that he recovered *ninety-nine* patients in a *hundred*!

On the impudence and insolence of these publications the reader will ask for no comment, and their falsehood (if, indeed, that will admit of a doubt) shall be amply proved, after I have given some account of the Doctor's practice of *emptying*, and of his coadjutors in carrying on the noble work.

The practice was, as he said, very simple, and very efficacious ; for it consisted merely of bleeding upon bleeding, sometimes to one hundred and fifty ounces, and of purge upon purge, sometimes to sixty grains of mercury and to ninety grains of jalap ! It would be highly presumptuous in me to pretend to give *my own* objections to this, or to any other mode of treating a disease : and, therefore, though such unmerciful bleeding and purging seem to be synonymous with death itself, I shall state the objections which were made.

Many insisted that the purges were of too drastic a nature ; they compared them to *arsenic*, and said it was a dose for a horse. They said, that the mercury excited salivation, even to loosening the teeth. They said, that it inflamed and lacerated the stomach and the bowels ; and, in proof, they cited a dissection made at Bush-hill, wherein were exhibited the horrid effects of the mercurial purges. They further said, and, as far as I was able to learn, with great truth, that this violent and dangerous purge, though it must inevitably be destructive in weak habits, was prescribed indiscriminately in all cases, to persons of both sexes, and of all ages. Finally, when the calls of humanity compelled them, after long forbearance, publicly to protest against these dreadful doses, they reprobated the use of them in the strongest terms. Doctor Currie earnestly besought the poor deluded Philadelphians to open their eyes, to beware of the new remedies ; for, said he, "the mode of treatment advised by Doctor Rush cannot, in the yellow fever, fail of being *certain death*."

As to the bleeding part of the practice, the same learned and experienced gentleman said, and I believe

most truly, that it was dangerously copious, and that many persons had been destroyed by it.* They said, that if the patient happened to survive such copious discharges of the vital fluid, they produced weakness, and that their consequences often terminated in the total ruin of the constitution. Here also, they justly complained of the want of discrimination, and asserted that blood-letting was prescribed in all cases, without any regard to the habit, age, or force of the disease.

To each of these objections Rush replied by producing patients who had survived the treatment objected to! That is to say, by proving to the satisfaction of the most incredulous, that *every one* he touched did not die! Nobody ever contradicted him; for it was never doubted, that there were constitutions capable of resisting even his prescriptions. For instance, he mentions Mr. Mierken, as being able to work in the sugar house, in nine days after his last bleeding; but, he takes good care not to say how much, or rather how little blood Mr. Mierken lost, and, in the language of one of his opponents, he forgets to say that Mr. Mierken is the Hercules of Philadelphia, and that his amazing strength is proverbial.

His co-operators in the practice above described, were his former pupils, Leib, Porter, Annan, Woodhouse, and Mease. To the above-named practitioners are to be added, of course, five pupils, who yet remained under the tuition of Rush.

Such were the medical characters, of whose concurrence and whose aid the Doctor had to boast. I shall now speak of the irregular brethren and sisterhood, who were called in to assist in administering

* Rush, in replying to this objection, has these words: "As a proof that I did not draw one ounce of blood too much, it will be only necessary to add, haemorrhages frequently occurred after a third, a fourth, and in one instance, after a sixth bleeding had been used."—Now, reader, of whatever nation, kindred, or tongue, you may be, if you live in an American seaport, and have a life that you think worth preserving, do not proceed any further till you have carefully, and candidly, perused a short article in a preceding number, by Dr. Ross, on blood-letting. Turn to it immediately, I conjure you, and do not quit it, till you have read it three times over.

the potent remedies, and whom the High Priest very properly calls, the “undisciplined sect of practitioners.” Of this sect, which was tolerably numerous, Rush records the exploits of a few of the most eminent ; these were, a Popish Priest, a German Apothecary, an Auctioneer, two old women, and a brace of Negro Parsons, the Reverend Absalom Jones, and the Reverend Richard Allen !

Of this motley squad the two reverend negroes seem to have been his favourites ; for, says he, “they spent all the intervals in which they were not employed in burying the dead, in visiting the poor who were sick, and in bleeding and purging them, agreeably to the directions” [his directions] “which had been published in all the newspapers.” He had the impudence to add, that the success of these fellows “was unparalleled by what is called regular practice.” But, ask any man, who had the mortification to be a spectator of their operations, and he will tell you what bloody work they made amongst the infatuated creatures who submitted to their treatment.

When the reader casts his eye on the wretched city ; when he sees Rush’s sister, his pupils, and, perhaps, twenty apothecaries’s apprentices besides, all making packets of mercury ; and when he sees the swift poison committed to the hands of old women and negroes, he will not be surprised at the fatal consequences : instead of astonishment at the vast increase of the bills of mortality, he will find ample occasion for thanksgiving that a single man was left alive.

But Rush, on the contrary, blessed God for the discovery he had made, and for the success of his practice. In his above-mentioned letter to Dr. Rodgers, of New-York, he modestly observed, that he had been “an unworthy instrument in the hands of a kind Providence of recovering *more* than ninety-nine out of a hundred of his patients ;” and he had before, with not less modesty, publicly proclaimed in Philadelphia, that, with the aid of *his* remedies, the fever was, “in point of danger and mortality, reduced to a level with the measles, the influenza, or a common cold.” In his Account of the Yellow Fever of 1793, a work

written after he had time to reflect, and to retract these assertions, he repeats them with additional effrontery, and thus deprives himself of all claim to an exemption from the charge of intentional falsehood. He gives no *list* of his patients ; an omission not to be accounted for otherwise than by his assurance that such a list would give the lie to his assertions, and, of course, withdraw the only prop by which the virtue of his famous discovery was supported. The evasion, by which he attempts to account for this omission, is the most pitiful that ever suggested itself. "I regret," says he, "that it is not in my power to furnish a list of them, for a majority of them were poor people, whose names are still unknown to me."

Can you believe this, reader ? Can you imagine that this man, who was labouring with might and main to establish his reputation on the success of a discovery, to which he had prefixed his name, would omit to note down the names of those he cured? recollect, too, that the public had been cautioned against his practice, as against "certain death." Under such circumstances, had he cured more than ninety-nine out of a hundred ; nay, had he cured but ninety-nine out of a thousand, can you believe that he would have omitted to note down the survivors ? He says a majority of his patients were poor people. But this did not prevent him from recording the names of the minority : and, besides, poverty does not deprive men of their names ; nor are the names of the poor any longer, or more difficult to write down, than those of the rich. The grand discoverer had several underlings in his house, and though they did, indeed, die off pretty fast, in spite of the specific powders, there was one, at least, I believe, left to take down the names of the patients. When I was in the army I frequently wrote from eight to ten regimental muster-rolls in one day, amounting in all, to about four thousand names : Rush must have had fearful trade, if his register would have had more work than this. Moreover, suppose that contrary to the dictates of common prudence, the registering of the names had actually been neglected, till the very hour when he *regretted* that he could not

furnish a list : how easily might he have repaired the loss by an advertisement in the newspapers, calling on all those who had been cured by him, to send their names to his house ? He was not very delicate, God knows, in thrusting his remedies into vogue ; and why he should be more delicate in obtaining proofs of their wonderful effects, is, I think, hard to be satisfactorily accounted for. No doubt can be entertained, that his patients (I mean the *live* ones) would have rejoiced in an opportunity of bearing testimony to the virtue of those means by which they had been rescued from the jaws of death. Never did a healing discovery fail of success for want of certificates of its efficacy ; on the contrary, wonder-working nostrums are always indebted for a great portion of celebrity, to the importance which each lucky patient attaches to its existence, and to the vanity which almost every man has, of appearing in print. I repeat, therefore, that a notification in the papers would have received immediate attention ; and that the patients, whom the discovery had left alive, would have vied with each other in a speedy communication of their names ; unless, indeed, they were *all* in the state of the unfortunate woman, who was described to Rush by Dr. Woodhouse, and "who, *after her recovery*, could not recollect her name!"—Poor souls ! If the doctor had advertised, few of them would, I am afraid, have recollect ed their names !

Fortunately, however, for Philradelphia, and unfortunately for Rush and his discovery, a bill of mortality was kept by the officers of the city. This bill of mortality, compared with the vaunts of the doctor, will enable any one to form a tolerably accurate judgment, not only of the truth of his statements, but of the saving effects of his remedies, as applied by himself and his numerous assistants.

The yellow fever of 1794 broke out on the first of August, and from that day to the 8th of September the number of deaths had been various, once as low as three, and once as high as forty-two. Now it was, that mercury and the lancet began to be put in motion, and I beseech you, reader, to mark their progress. "List ! list ! O list !"

On September the twelfth Rush began to recommend his powders by public advertisement. He, at the same time, told the people not to leave the city ; that there was no longer any danger, for that his discovery had put the fever upon a level with the measles, the influenza, or a common cold. For some days previous to this, the ravages of the fever had become less alarming, the bill of mortality had fallen from forty-two to twenty-three per day ; and, as Rush had reduced the disease, in point of danger, to a level with a common cold, the poor Philadelphians, who were carried away by his noisy impudence, began to hail him as their deliverer from a calamity which they now looked upon as nearly at an end. But, death, who seems always to have had an implacable grudge against the Pennsylvanian "Hippocrates," persecuted him, in the present instance, with more severity than ever ; for, from the day on which Rush declared that his discovery had reduced the fever to a level with a common cold ; from the day on which he promulgated the infallibility of his nostrum ; from that day did the bill of mortality begin to increase in a fearful degree, as will be seen by the following extract,

	<i>Days.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>		<i>Days.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>	
Sept.	11	- - 23		Sept.	21	
	12	- - 33			22	- - 76
	13	- - 37			23	- - 68
	14	- - 48			24	- - 96
	15	- - 56			25	- - 87
	16	- - 67			26	- - 52
	17	- - 81			27	- - 60
	18	- - 69			28	- - 51
	19	- - 61			29	- - 57
	20	- - 67			30	- - 63
Oct.	1	- - 74		Oct.	7	- - 82
	2	- - 66			8	- - 90
	3	- - 78			9	- - 102
	4	- - 58			10	- - 93
	5	- - 71			11	- - 119
	6	- - 76				

Thus, you see, that though the fever was, on the 12th of September, reduced to a level with a common cold ; though the lancet was continually unsheathed ; though Rush and his subalterns were ready at every call, the deaths did actually increase ; and, incredible as it may seem, this increase grew with that of the very practice which saved more than ninety-nine patients out of a hundred ! Astonishing obstinacy ! Perverse Philadelphians ! Notwithstanding there was a man in your city, who could have healed you at a touch, you continued to die ! Notwithstanding the precious purges were advertised at every corner, and were brought even to your doors, and besides by old women and negroes ; notwithstanding life was offered you on terms the most reasonable and accommodating, still you persisted in dying ! Nor did barely dying content you. It was not enough for you to reject the means of prolonging your existence, but you must begin to drop off the faster from the moment that those means were presented to you ; and this, for no earthly purpose, that I can see, but the malicious one of injuring the reputation of the "saving angel," whom "a kind Providence had sent to your assistance!"

But, it was not only amongst the people in general that the doctor met with this mortifying perverseness, even the members of his own household, those who dipped in the same dish with him, and who were to share in his honours, seem, in like manner, to have conspired against the fame of his discovery, for, of his sister and five pupils, all of whom were attacked with the fever, *four* had the ingratitude to seal, with their death, the condemnation of his practice.

This fact, which the discoverer would doubtless have concealed, if he could, gave a mortal blow to the Rushite system. When the doctor was called on, as he repeatedly was, for a *list* of his patients, he pretended he had kept none ; when the dreadful increase of the bill of mortality was shown to have begun with the use of his remedies, he replied, that this increase was occasioned by the want of timely application, by that timidity which prevented patients from losing blood, or swallowing mercury enough, and by a want

of proper nurses. These reasons, though they could not possibly account for the increase of the bill of mortality, might, in some sort, account for its not decreasing, and might also, as far as they applied to the city in general, be opposed, with some plausibility, to the charges brought against the inefficacy of the new discovery ; but they could, in no way whatever, be applicable to the brethren and sisterhood, who were not only fully persuaded of the virtue of, but were employed in preparing and administering the infallible remedies, more especially to the happy few, who resided under the same roof with the "saving angel" himself. These fortunate beings were, undoubtedly, kept in that state of preparation recommended in the doctor's bills ! they lived in a fine airy house, and wanted for no menial assistance ; they could not suffer for want of a timely application of the remedies, for, besides that, the great "Hippocrates" himself was always within call, each patient, the sister excepted, was himself a bleeder, and they had all the life preserving purges continually under their fingers ; yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, there died no less than *four* out of the *six* ; and, as this is the only authentic record, from which any judgment can be formed of the doctor's success, we have an undoubted right to proceed, in our calculation, from the known to the unknown, and to conclude, accordingly, that, instead of *saving* more than ninety-nine, he lost at least sixty-six, out of every hundred of his patients ; and, to close the melancholy account, it does not appear, from a list which came out early in the fever of 1797, under the signature of one of the *pupils* who had the good fortune to survive, that this triumphant practice, when carried to its full extent, saved, or rather *spared* more than twenty-two out of the hundreds and hundreds who were said to have submitted to it.*

* This list was published in all the Philadelphia papers on the 14th of September, 1797. It was signed by John Redman Coxe, and was intended to remove the fears entertained of copious bleeding ; but, while the list itself proved, that the Rushites sometimes bled from 100 to 150 ounces, it could produce but twenty-two persons who had been able to resist a bleeding of

Well might Dr. Currie call upon his fellow-citizens to open their eyes! Well might he assure them, that Rush's yellow fever remedies were "certain death."

Such, reader, was the origin, and such were the first blessed fruits, of the far-famed system of depletion. It remains for me to give my reasons for endeavouring to explode it, and to justify the means I made use of for that purpose.

In the dispute of 1793 Rush was fairly defeated, notwithstanding he wrote more in the several newspapers than all the other physicians put together, and notwithstanding he plyed his "dear Philadelphians," his "dear fellow-citizens" with more than *quantum sufficit* of that only lingo, for which he has long been renowned. His "dear fellow-citizens" loved coaxing well enough, but they loved life better. Still resolved, however, not to acknowledge himself in an error, but to support his practice, if possible, he stopped until the fever was over, and then, like the famous physician of Valladolid, he wrote a book; that book to which this work is so largely indebted, and which produced an effect precisely the contrary of the one intended. Men could not be persuaded, even by the smooth tongue of Rush, that bleeding almost to death was likely to save life.

When, therefore, the yellow fever again broke out in the year 1797, "Hippocrates" and his pupils found very little to do. The "saving angel" recommenced writing in the newspapers, but with somewhat less confidence and more caution than formerly. He did not (except in a few instances) address himself directly to his "dear fellow-citizens," but published letters, sent to him by his brethren of the lancet practice, giving accounts of the great cures wrought by bleeding and mercurial purges. Sometimes a letter from Rush to some other of the learned tribe would appear, preceded by a letter requesting information respecting his mode of practice. On these occasions

upwards of fifty ounces! Coxe did not perceive that he was establishing, in place of removing, the fears entertained of the practice. But, in mistakes of this kind, he only followed the example of his too sanguine preceptor.

the discoverer seldom failed to expatiate largely on the virtues of his remedies, and on the success of their application, always taking care to throw in a due portion of compliment to the skill of his correspondent, and of tender solicitude for the welfare of his "dear countrymen" and "dear fellow citizens." These systematic endeavours for reviving the practice were carried to such a shameless length, that there sometimes appeared in print letters written to, and answers received from, physicians dwelling in the same city of Philadelphia, men with whom Rush was most intimate, and with whom he conversed, probably, ten times a day. What necessity was there for such men to *write* to each other? What could they write for, but the express purpose of publishing their letters in the papers? And what object could they have in view, in these indirect addresses to the public, but that of extolling their own practice, of advancing their own fame, and increasing their own profits?

These tricks did not, however, pass unperceived. Many gentlemen of Philadelphia (not physicians) expressed to me their dread of the practice, and their indignation at the arts that were made use of to render it prevalent. They thought, and not without reason, that it was lawful, just, and fair, to employ a newspaper in decrying what other newspapers had been employed to extol. In fact, I wanted very little persuasion to induce me to endeavour to prevent a revival of that which I had always looked upon as the scourge to the city, in 1793, and which now, I was fully persuaded, menaced the lives of my friends, my neighbours, my workmen, my customers, and, in short, of the people in general amongst whom I dwelt. Every thing seemed to threaten a return of the former consternation and calamity. The chariot of the mighty "Hippocrates" began again to rattle along the lanes and alleys; the secret of "undisciplined" "practitioners" were again taking the field; the Rev. Negroes had tucked up the sleeves of their garberdine, were preparing to draw the lancet and throw away the scabbard. Purge and bleed! purge and bleed! resounded through the half-deserted city, while the

responsive howlings of the dogs "gave dreadful note of preparation."

Frigid indeed must have been my feelings, or cowardly must have been my heart, if, with a public print, such as I held in my hand, I had, in a scene like this, remained a silent spectator. Far was it from me to think of a course so dishonourable. I thought I saw approaching all the horrors of 1793, and both my interest and my duty commanded me to endeavour to avert them.

For writing *medical essays*; for controverting *scientifically* the wild positions of Rush and his adherents, I acknowledged myself then, as I do now, totally unqualified. To the charges of ignorance in medicine, brought against me by the great "*Hippocrates*," I might, indeed, have found a triumphant reply in his own book on the *Yellow Fever*; I might have produced himself; I might have quoted the passages, where he asserts, that the success of the two negroes, in curing the yellow fever, was "*unparalleled by what was called regular practice*"; that a hundred things are taught in the common schools, less useful, "*and many things more difficult than the knowledge that would be necessary to cure a yellow fever, or the plague*"; and that "*all the knowledge necessary to discover when blood-letting is proper, might be taught to a boy or a girl of twelve years old in a few hours!*" I taught it," adds he, "*in less time to several persons during our late epidemic!*"—"It is time," exclaims he in another place, "*to take the cure of pestilential fevers out of the hands of physicians, and to place it in the hands of the people!*"—I might have shown that he very highly applauded the conduct of the popish priest, who exhorted the *other* physicians "*to renounce the pride of science, and adopt the new remedies.*"—I might, in short, have proved most satisfactorily, that, according to the written assertions of this impudent innovator, I was duly and amply qualified to approve of, or to condemn, any mode of treating the *yellow fever*; and indeed, had I been fool or knave enough to join his troop of mock doctors, I could probably have talked very learnedly

about "bleeding as white as Jersey veal," about "washing the guts," and "shaking the gall bladder;" nay, it is possible, that I could have equalled even the Pennsylvanian "Hippocrates" in that butcher like dialect, which is so admirably calculated to vulgarise the medical profession, and to brutalize the human frame. In this *petite guerre* I had an excellent auxiliary in Mr. Fenno, jun. or rather, Fenno was the principal and I the auxiliary. Never was a paper war carried on with greater activity and perseverance, or crowned with more complete success. It began about the middle of September, and before October was nearly ended, the system of depletion was the standing jest of the town.

Extracts from Thompson's Narrative.

ON GIVING POISON AS MEDICINE.

The practice of giving poison as medicine, which is so common among the medical faculty at the present day, is of the utmost importance to the public; and is a subject that I wish to bring home to the serious consideration of the whole body of the people of this country, and enforce in the strongest manner on their minds the pernicious consequences that have happened, and are daily taking place by reason of giving mercury, arsenic, nitre, opium, and other deadly poisons to cure disease. It is admitted by those who make use of these things, that the introducing them into the system is very dangerous and that they often prove fatal. During thirty years practice I have had opportunity to gain much experience on this subject, and am ready to declare that I am perfectly and decidedly convinced, beyond all doubt, that there can be no possible good derived from using in any manner or form whatever, those poisons; but on the other hand, there is a great deal of hurt done. More than nine-tenths of the chronic cases that have come under my care, have been such as had been run down with some one or the whole of the above named medical poisons; and the greatest difficulty I have had to encounter in removing the complaints which my patients

laboured under, has been to clear the system of mercury, nitre, or opium, and bring them back to the same state they were in before taking them. It is a very easy thing to get them into the system, but very hard to get them out again.

Those who make use of these things as medicine, seem to cloak the administering them under the specious pretence of great skill and art in preparing and using them; but this kind of covering will not blind the people, if they would examine it and think for themselves, instead of believing that every thing said or done by a learned man must be right; for poison given to the sick by a person of the greatest skill, will have exactly the same effect as it would if given by a fool—The fact is, the operation of it is diametrically opposed to nature, and every particle of it, that is taken into the system, will strengthen the power of the enemy to health.

If there should be doubts in the mind of any one of the truth of what I have said concerning the articles I have named being poisonous and destructive to the constitution and health of man, I will refer them to the works published by those who recommend their use; where they will find evidence enough to satisfy the most credulous of the dangerous consequences and fatal effects, of giving them as medicine. To remove all doubts of their being poison I will make a few extracts from standard medical works, as the best testimony that can be given in the case.—“*Muriate of mercury*, is one of the most violent poisons with which we are acquainted. Externally it acts as a caustic; but even externally, it must be used with very great caution.”,

“*Oxyd of arsenic*, is one of the most sudden and violent poisons we are acquainted with.”—“When the quantity is so very small as not to prove fatal, tremors, paralysis and lingering hectic, succeed.”—“We are, on the combined testimony of many medical practitioners, conspicuous for their professional zeal and integrity, irresistably induced to declare our opinion, at least, against the internal use of this active and dangerous medicine.”

"*Antimony*, is a medicine of the greatest power of any known substance ; a quantity too minute to be sensible in the most delicate balance, is capable of producing violent effects, if taken dissolved, or in a soluble state."—"All the metallic preparations are uncertain, as it entirely depends on the state of the stomach, whether they have no action at all, or operate with dangerous violence."

"*Nitre*. Salt petre.—This powerful salt, when inadvertently taken in too large quantities, is one of the most fatal poisons."—"For some interesting observations relative to the deleterious properties of salt petre, the reader is referred to Dr. Mitchell's letter to Dr. Priestly."

For the Medical Reformer.

MR. EDITOR,

I have devoted a number of years to the practice of medicine, during which time I have had ample opportunities of witnessing the effects of the present system of treatment for most or all diseases ; I have investigated it, uninfluenced by interest or prejudice ; and am compelled conscientiously to declare, that physicians are not able to cure a single disorder incident to the human body. And the writer hereby challenges the faculty to prove this assertion groundless. But this is not all. Were they secure from doing harm, their conduct might be excusable ; so far from this, their treatment of the sick is replete with danger. I am called daily to witness the mischief and misery resulting from their practice either in physic, surgery, or midwifery. How many miserable objects do we see in our streets, deprived of their limbs by some butchering surgeon, others bed-ridden all their days by the use of mercury, or some other poisonous mineral ; while thousands have been hurried to untimely graves.

I was called a few days ago to attend a woman who had been recently confined. After the child was born her physician suffered the placenta (after birth) to remain : he assured her and the attendants that it was

removed. They however were not satisfied, and related the circumstance to a friend of her's, who immediately took measures to ascertain her true condition. The writer was called upon to see her. Upon examination, the placenta was found in the posterior part of the uterus, and finally with no small difficulty extracted in a putrescent state. The effluvia arising therefrom was so great, that the persons present were almost suffocated. Her life was in the greatest jeopardy. I might mention many similar circumstances.

Another case has fallen under my notice, which shows the pernicious effects of the present mode of treatment. Mrs. H—, a woman of a full plethoric habit, was attacked with an inflammation on the liver. The inflammatory symptoms, after some length of time, measurably subsided, with a partial remission of the pain. The expectoration (purulent matter) indicated a suppurative state of that organ. Successive exposures produced frequent relapses. She was bled repeatedly, which rendered her an invalid till the approach of warm weather. The following winter her disorder returned; and her physician renewed the same *absurd, senseless, and injurious* treatment. The only relief she found was a change of season.

Last winter she was again attacked with the symptoms of her former complaint. She had become so predisposed to inflammatory affection, in consequence of repeated blood-letting, that the disorder had now become more violent than at any former period. Instead of pursuing a different course of treatment, recourse was *again* had to repeated effusions of the vital fluid. But, strange to tell, notwithstanding this panacea, this universal remedy, the symptoms were more and more unfavourable. The disease made rapid progress, the inflammation was great. This did not deter this bold phlebotomist from pursuing his *infallible* remedy. She was now bled every other day till life was almost extinct, her pulse languid, her countenance ghastly, with every symptom of approaching dissolution. Her physician now saw the powers of life give way, and modestly intimated the

propriety of calling in another of the faculty to hold a consultation. Through the miraculous intervention of Divine Providence she was not *murdered*.

This disciple of Gil Blas afterwards had the audacity to affirm, that *bleeding* saved her life. I am truly astonished that a man of sense should manifest such egregious folly, such consummate ignorance! This wanton violation to nature has not as yet removed this woman from the stage of action, but the writer hesitates not to predict, that in all probability in one or two winters it will hurry her to an untimely grave, a martyr to bleeding.

HEROCLIDES.

From the Medical Newspaper.

THE PREACHER.

Rom. iii. 16.—*Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known.*

There are no men on earth on whom so much is depending, as on doctors, as it respects this life; and there are no men, according to their books, who, in my view, use such destructive things as they give. The account given of the sick woman, and of those who attended her, seem applicable in this case, Mark v. 25, 26. "And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many *physicians*, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse," &c. It appears that their way was destructive, and led to misery; for the poor woman, in addition to twelve years' sickness, suffering, and loss of property, was in a worse condition than at the beginning.

Without going back eighteen hundred years, we may see a proof of the destructive and miserable way of treating the sick and dead in our day, and near our dwellings. One says, my child had a disorder in her eyes; I applied to a doctor, and she soon became *blind*, and so must remain until she dies. Another, my child was unwell, the doctor gave her mercury,

and she has wholly lost the use of her arm to this day. A third says, I had a fever, the doctor salivated me ; and I have lost all my teeth. Another, I was sick, all my hair came off, and so I remain. Another, I had a fever, and took calomel, and a shock of the palsy followed. Another, my child had a fever, the doctor shaved his head, and blistered it ; he became delirious, and died. Another says, my sister was sick and restless, the doctor gave her opium, she fell asleep, and never woke again. Another, I had a fever, it, or the mercury, fell into my leg, and caused a running sore from that time. A stranger comes forward and says, my child took cold in his arm, I applied to a doctor, who attended him almost half a year, until he had three sores on his arm, his elbow stiff, but little appetite, with the loss of his health, and a large bill to pay, and the child worse at the end than at the beginning. And why all this destruction and misery ? Because poison was administered instead of medicine, or because the difficulties were not rightly managed.

In addition to all this, witness the destruction of human bodies after they are dead, and the misery of friends on hearing what has been done to the dead, by men professing to be friends to the sick and distressed.

MEDICAL CATECHISM.

Question. What is antimony ?

Answer. It is a metal. The pure metal obtained from the ore, is of a silvery white colour, &c.

Q. What is the power of it ?

A. "The antimonial metal is a medicine of the greatest power of any known substance ; a quantity too minute to be sensible in the most delicate balance, is capable of producing violent effects, if taken dissolved, or in a soluble state."

Q. When was it first used as a medicine ?

A. "Its internal use does not seem to have been established till the end of the fifteenth century ; and even at that time it was by many looked upon as poisonous."

Q. Are metallic preparations uncertain ?

A. "All the metallic preparations are uncertain ; as it entirely depends on the state of the stomach, whether they have no action at all, or operate with dangerous violence."

Q. What is the nature of copper in a man ?

A. "Its effects, when taken into the stomach, are highly deleterious, and often fatal ; and particularly affects the *prima viæ*, exciting excessive nausea, vomiting, cholic pains, and purging, sometimes blood. It also produces agitation of mind, headache, vertigo, delirium, and causes fainting, convulsions, paralysis, and apoplexy."

Q. What use do doctors make of copper ?

A. They make pills of it to give people in apoplexy ; a disease which copper brings on.

Q. How are copper pills made ?

A. As follows : "Take of ammoniaret of copper, in fine powders, sixteen grains—bread crumbs, four scruples—solution of carbonate of ammonia, as much as may be sufficient. Beat them into a mass, to be divided into thirty-two equal pills."

MEDICAL CIRCULAR.

"*Secundum Artem.*"

The poor man's lamentation, in cases of sickness ; and the advantage taken by the doctor with the mode of treating pleurisy and fevers.—

(Written by Dr. Samuel Thompson, of Surrey, state of New-Hampshire, Nov. 1809, while in prison at Newburyport, Mass. on a malicious charge of murdering one of his patients, of which he was honourably acquitted by a special session of the Supreme Court, 20th Dec. 1809.

My wife is sick, and like to die ;
"Go for the doctor !" is the cry ;
"Haste quick away, return with speed,
She never did more a doctor need."

The doctor comes with great perfume,
Like summer's rose in height of bloom :
His skill is spread on the outside,
And thus he gains on woman's pride.

Near the bed-side where madam lies,
He seats himself—"you're sick," he cries :
"O yes, so very sick am I,
If you can't help me, I shall die!"

"A dang'rous fever has seized thee,
And 'tis the raging *pleurisy* :
I know it by your lab'ring breast,
The load with which your stomach's prest ;

Stagnation of the purple tide,
The tort'ring pain that racks your side ;
And higher still I fear 'twill rise,
(I find it by your pulse, your eyes.)

"Lest the disorder, I rebuke—"
So takes her blood, and gives a puke ;
Thus makes the foe his hat to doff,
Then takes his leave, and pushes off.

At length the doctor comes again—
"Oh ! what," says he, "not free of pain?"
No, you've destroyed, for life, all chance,
By physic, puking, and your lance.

The doctor feels her pulse again,
And says, the fever makes her pain !
"And quickly that I must subdue :
I must kill that, or that will you!"

To kill the heat, he *nitre* deals,
Opium to quell the pain she feels ;
And when their office-work is o'er,
Death loudly calls at the heart's door.

The spirits muster up their force,
T' oppose the fell destroyer's course ;
But with one touch, he ends the strife,
By putting out the fire of life.

The doctor says, "I did my best ;
I hope your wife is gone to rest :
Your part you now must soon fulfil ;
That is, to pay my mod'rate bill."

My bill is rendered in this way—
Your wife's attendance night and day ;
To *physic*, *bleeding*, *drops*, and *stuff*—
It's *fifty dollars*—cheap enough!"

Where is the pity they should feel?
 They charge the same to *kill* as *heal*!
 And crave withal, the people's thanks,
 And seize the prize and leave the blanks. *

In case of fever, see them come,
 And the whole system down they run;
 And lest the man should rise at last,
 With med'cine's cords they bind him fast.

The doctor says, how still he lies!
 How fine the med'cine is! he cries:
 His blood is took, the fever gone,
 And thus the killing job is done.

The *fever* rises, *nature* gains,
 The sick man feels again his pains;
 And soon about this man would be,
 Were he from such *cold doctors* free.

Should pain increase, the fever rise,
 He *nitre* and the *laud'num* plies:
 Thus to subdue and ease the pain,
 He lowly lays his strength again.

This is what makes the fever run—
 They nature fight, till she's most done;
 Then her recovery to work out,
 They leave her, and the man's about.

They take their *nature* all away,
 They bleed and physic, night and day;
 And the more poison they can give,
 Conceive they've better chance to live.

Arsenic, *zinc*, and *ritiol* too,
 And *mercury*, to physic through;
 All this it's said, is what they give—
 Tough must the patient be to live.

OUR FATHER, (whom all goodness fills,) *
 Provides the means, to cure our ills;
 The simple *herbs* beneath our feet,
 Well us'd, relieve our pain complete.

While doctors rove in foreign parts,
 And rack their pow'r's, and skill and arts,
 Health's med'cines grow upon our land,
 They're ours, by stretching forth our hand.

This *art* I studied in my youth,
 And now assert it as a truth,

* He takes the *money* and leaves the dead bodies.

I can them use in diff'rent ways,
And turn a fever in two days.
How oft we hear the doctors say,
"The *fever*, it must have its way!"
If that's the case, I would ask you
What good they, or their medicines do?

Man is perplex'd, and much to do,
That has a talent forth to show;
Much opposition he will find,
If it's against the common kind.

Must man be silent, while he's breath,
And hide his *talent* in the earth;
When nature urges him to move,
And not the *gift* of heaven improve?

Like Absalom, I'd sooner bear,
To be suspended by the hair;
Than silent be, devoid of good,
And not improve the gift of God.

OBSERVATIONS TO THE POINT.

"When a sick man leaves to *nature* to do, he hazards much: when he leaves all for the *doctor* to do, he hazards more: and since there is hazard both ways, I would much sooner choose to rely upon *nature*; for this, at least we may be sure of, that she acts as honestly as she can, and that she does not find her account in prolonging the disease."

ANECDOCE.

It is said that a young man having finished his studies upon fashionable minerals, opium, blistering, issues, setons, &c. set out in search for a place. On his way he met an old man, a Quaker, with whom he had been acquainted. Sir, said the young man, how shall I make the people know I am a doctor? "I will tell thee friend; when thou hast found a place, I advise thee to buy about a dozen ducks, and they will tell the people where thou art, for they will constantly say *quack! quack!* and by this, the people will all find thee."